

Second, it will expand eligibility for residents to claim the child tax credit. Prior to the ARP, only families with three or more children in Puerto Rico could claim the child tax credit. Why those American citizens were treated differently than all the others was beyond me and strikes me as nasty. But now every family can.

Third, the ARP bill will add \$1 billion—\$1 billion—in food assistance. Residents of American territories don't receive traditional food assistance programs like those in the United States, such as the SNAP program, but instead their governments receive block grants that have been capped by the Federal Government.

The American Rescue Plan makes sure that Puerto Rico, which suffers devastating rates of poverty, 43 percent, and especially childhood poverty—an unacceptable 57 percent of all the children in Puerto Rico live in poverty. So we want to make sure that Puerto Rico receives its fair share of Federal food assistance.

The American Rescue Plan may be the greatest anti-poverty effort in a generation, and we make sure that Puerto Rico is part of it.

Now let me turn my attention to schools. One of most enduring images of the COVID-19 pandemic will be the empty classroom. For 12 months, teachers have done their level best to keep their students engaged with remote learning, but there have been incredible difficulties. Too many students don't have reliable internet. Too many parents can't be there to help young kids log on and keep up with their work. Simply put, there is no replacement for having kids in the classroom. We need to get our schools to reopen as quickly and as safely as possible.

Now, my Republican colleagues have made a lot of noise about reopening our schools, but they don't want to dedicate any resources to actually getting it done. We need money to do this. There are many more expenses under COVID.

Through the American Rescue Plan, Senate Democrats delivered the single largest investment in American education ever. We are proud of that. Proud. Let me say it again. Through the American Rescue Plan, Senate Democrats delivered the single largest investment in American education ever—ever—\$170 billion to repair the damage caused by this pandemic, three-quarters of which will go directly to K-12 education, prioritizing school districts that need it the most. This will help schools update ventilation, hire more nurses and janitors, make classroom sizes smaller, and make getting kids to and from school safe.

In short, the American Rescue Plan will greatly accelerate the safe and effective reopening of schools. Once kids are back in the classroom, the American Rescue Plan will help make sure they can stay there and succeed. After what has been a lost year for too many

students, this bill provides significant support for learning recovery programs—after-school programs, summer school programs, and other resources to help kids catch up and get back on track.

Through the American Rescue Plan, we have made a life-changing investment in our students. It is one of the many ways this bill will help us recover from the crisis and come back stronger than ever before.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. ROSEN). The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

NOMINATION OF XAVIER BECERRA

Mr. McCONNELL. Last week, our Democratic colleagues had to resort to a rare tactic to rescue the stalled nomination of Xavier Becerra to run the Department of Health and Human Services.

The distinguishing feature of this nominee's resume is not his expertise in health, medicine, or administration. That part of the resume is very brief. What stands out are Mr. Becerra's commitments to partisan warfare and his far-left ideology.

He has supported the sweeping government takeover of healthcare they call "Medicare for All," which would actually end Medicare as we know it and would rip away families' private insurance plans.

As the administration's policies continue to create a border crisis, Mr. Becerra is someone who believes we should not just have blanket amnesty, but that entering the country illegally should not even be a crime.

And even amid a global pandemic, the most significant health-related experience on the nominee's record is his efforts to wield the legal system against religious Sisters to make them violate their faith and conscience.

Up to now, every person who has ever been confirmed as Secretary of Health and Human Services has either been favorably reported by the Finance Committee or discharged by unanimous consent. There is ample reason why this nominee would be a glaring exception.

I continue to urge a "no" vote.

NOMINATION OF KATHERINE C. TAI

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, fortunately, the Senate will first be confirming a thoroughly qualified nominee to be the new administration's top trade official.

Katherine Tai is just the kind of qualified and mainstream person who is positioned to serve President Biden

and the country quite well. That is why she received broad bipartisan support from the Finance Committee and why the vote to advance her nomination yesterday was 98 to 0.

I look forward to working with Ms. Tai to embrace trade and push back on abusive practices from China and other anticompetitive countries.

Trade is a huge strength of America. It drives job creation and economic growth. Just look at my home State, for example. Exports support more than 140,000 jobs in Kentucky. Hard-working Kentuckians supply nearly 200 countries with everything from agricultural goods to medicines, to aerospace parts and motor vehicles.

In the last Congress, we modernized our trade with our neighbors to the north and south through the USMCA. We gave Kentucky farmers, workers, and consumers a long-awaited boost.

But our job creators still face unfair barriers, including those targeting American spirits. The Bluegrass is proud to craft 95 percent of the world's bourbon, but, currently, tariffs put Kentucky distillers at a disadvantage in their largest export markets.

Ms. Tai should address these unfair international headwinds facing Kentuckians. I would encourage her to focus on expanding markets and reducing barriers for products and services from all 50 States.

Americans would welcome the growth in opportunity and prosperity. And, if you ask me, the whole world could benefit from a little more Kentucky bourbon.

CHINA

Mr. McCONNELL. Madam President, tomorrow, the Secretary of State and the President's National Security Advisor will have their first face-to-face meeting with Chinese officials. I am glad our officials met with regional allies like Japan and South Korea right beforehand and have been in touch with Australia and European allies as well. It is essential that we and our friends present a united front.

Now, the United States and the whole world need the President's team to deliver a strong message tomorrow.

During the campaign, President Biden spoke dismissively about the threat from China. But thus far, in office, his team has shown signs they understand that Communist China threatens America, our allies, and the prevailing international system.

The world spent years presuming that welcoming China into the international community would inevitably cause its rulers to play by the rules. Twenty years ago, President Clinton said: "[E]conomic innovation and political empowerment . . . will inevitably go hand in hand." But since then, rather than the rest of the world exporting liberty and transparency into China, Beijing has found more success exporting authoritarianism and corruption beyond its borders.